


STATE OF INDIANA

DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE



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TO: County Assessors
CC: Sales Disclosure Vendors
FROM: Brian Bailey, Commissioner 
RE: Future of Sales Disclosure Reporting
DATE: February 9, 2012

The Department of Local Government Finance ("Department") will be unveiling changes to the submission of sales disclosure data during 2012. This memo sets forth the details and the timeline for these changes.

Background

Generally, when a property is conveyed, the parties to the conveyance must jointly complete and sign a Sales Disclosure Form. This form is prescribed by the Department. IC 6-1.1-5.5-3 requires a party to submit the sales disclosure form to the county assessor, who is responsible for reviewing the form for accuracy and completeness. If the form is accurate and complete, the county assessor stamps the form as eligible and returns it to the appropriate party for filing with the county auditor. The form is filed with the county auditor, who collects the \$10 filing fee, when required. The physical document, with signatures, is retained by the county assessor.

In addition to this, the county assessor also has the obligation under IC 6-1.1-5.5-3(c) to submit to the Department an electronic version of the data contained on the physical documents as well as any modifications the assessor has recorded. This requires someone—either the assessor or the buyer/seller or agent thereof—to enter the information into a software program that stores this electronic record. The electronic records must then be submitted to the Department, which must (1) review the files for formatting and determine whether they are compliant; and (2) maintain a statewide database of the submissions.

Since 2008, counties have had two options for converting the "paper form" data into electronic files. First, counties could choose to utilize a free, web-based software program that is offered by the Department, which would allow users to directly populate the state database. Second, counties could purchase separate software that allows users to input the data. In this case, the county is responsible for submitting electronic files to a SharePoint site operated by the Department, which enables the records to be inserted into the state database.

The Department, having examined the current process, has determined that there is substantial benefit to be gained from modifying the current process.

Objectives

The Department has successfully launched the Indiana Gateway for Government Units (“Gateway”), a web-based application that is currently being used for budgeting, annual financial reporting, and debt reporting. Users of Gateway have given consistent feedback that the application is user-friendly and easy to learn. The Department intends to build on the success of Gateway by expanding it to incorporate a newly designed, user-friendly sales disclosure reporting application. The Gateway Sales Disclosure Form Reporting (“Gateway SDF”) will replace the current reporting process for all counties, including those that wish to continue using the vendor and upload option.

The Department intends to improve and streamline the current submission process so that the state database remains complete, accurate, and up-to-date throughout the year. This will bring about enhanced transparency of the data for the public, which can access the data online. The improvements are geared toward two main objectives:

Make the free, state-provided SDF entry software more user-friendly. We will use the style and development tactics of the Gateway budget and debt applications to create a faster and easier application for the users in the twenty-one counties that are using the state-provided software. We will also draw from over one hundred survey responses that were completed by these users in summer 2011 to create an application that better meets the needs of the users. As with the current state-offered system, assessors will have a secured area within which to review and edit the data.

Incorporate the Vendor Upload Option into Gateway SDF. The Department and vendors have experienced numerous challenges with the current SharePoint submission process. The process has not resulted in consistent, successful insertion of files into the state database. In some, but not all cases, this is because the submitted files do not meet the specifications for insertion. However, it is difficult for vendors to know if this is the case since the SharePoint process does not provide such feedback. In other instances, properly generated files have been posted but the SharePoint process has experienced glitches and other problems that prevent records from being inserted into the state database. To resolve these problems, the Department intends to draw from the success of Gateway’s budget upload process by moving the sales disclosure upload process to “inside” the Gateway SDF application. Counties using vendor systems will have login credentials for Gateway SDF and will submit the files there instead of the SharePoint site. This new upload process may also be used by title companies and other “mass users” in counties that do not use a vendor system. The new upload process will give the user feedback about the file and the user will be able to view the data through the application after upload to ensure that it uploaded correctly.

Timeline

February 9, 2012: The Department will close the vendor upload SharePoint process. The Department will maintain records uploaded through the SharePoint process, but will no longer be accepting additional records. The state-provided SDF entry software will remain in place for the twenty-one counties that do not use a vendor.

April 1, 2012: The Department will make available a demonstration version of Gateway SDF. This will include the new state-provided SDF entry software and the new vendor upload. Users and vendors are encouraged to create a login, test the system, and report any problems to the Department immediately.

April, May, and June 2012: The Department will conduct training sessions and other outreach using the demonstration version of Gateway SDF. This may include recruitment of volunteers from outside the Department to participate in a “train the trainer” program.

July 30, 2012: The Department will close the state-provided SDF entry website.

August 1, 2012: Gateway SDF will launch within the live Gateway website and will be fully utilized by all counties. That may mean that users in the county directly enter data through Gateway SDF’s entry screens, or that the county or its vendor uploads its data files through Gateway SDF. The file specifications for the vendor upload will remain the same as those used in previous years.

Sales Disclosure Data Review Process for 2011 Sales

Regardless of the process used to transmit the sales data to the Department, all sales disclosure data from the 2011 sales period (January 1, 2011 to February 29, 2012) should be entered, validated, and transmitted to the Department on or before April 2, 2012.

The process of submitting sales data to the Department for the 2011 sales review differs depending on the process used by the county to track its sales disclosures.

For counties that use the state sales disclosure program, the following steps should be followed. All sales disclosures from the 2011 sales period should be entered in the state application. Each disclosure must be reviewed and validated within the application. The steps within the application will be the same as in previous years, but for reference, the technical guidance will be sent to counties that use the state system. Once all sales for the 2011 sales period have been reviewed and validated within the State Sales Disclosure Program, the county should advise the Department that the data is ready for review by sending an email notice to data@dlgf.in.gov.

For counties using a vendor sales disclosure program, the Department will once again collect annual files directly from counties. Counties using vendor systems should also ensure that all sales have been reviewed and validated. After the data has been reviewed and validated, the county should run the three required sales disclosure files – SALEDISC, SALECONTAC, and SALEPARCEL – for the entire 2011 sales review period, January 1, 2011 through February 29,

2012. The text files must be zipped together into one submission and sent to data@dlgf.in.gov and lsa.data@iga.in.gov by April 2, 2012.

Similar to previous years, changes to the sales data after April 2, 2012 that are made during the ratio study process should be documented by the county. If these changes are significant in nature, the county may be asked to submit such documentation during the ratio study process to explain differences between the submitted sales data and the data used for the ratio study.

If you have any questions about Gateway SDF or would like to volunteer as a trainer or tester, please contact Director of Data Analysis Eric Bussis at erbussis@dlgf.in.gov or 317.232.3759.